

jack known as Jersey lightning. But he found that he might as well have asked them to change their color; so he turned them loose and began on reckless motor people."

"Didn't the standpatters come back and make trouble for him?"

"No, they were so proud of themselves for withstanding his efforts to reform them that they felt only good will toward him. He had flattered their vanity."

"Why don't we break out?" I asked. "Aren't there enough of us?"

Phipps shook his head. "We might escape from an ordinary prison; but this is an extraordinary one. Popkin's guards and attendants this year are men who have been maimed by automobiles. Jobs are hard for lame men to find, you know; so Popkin gets a clipping bureau to supply him with accounts of automobile accidents, and if the victim of an accident recovers and proves to be the right sort of chap, Popkin hires him."

"You don't say!"

"Girard, over there, has it worse than any of us. That waiter with the extra bad limp—maybe you noticed him at dinner—is a fellow that Girard ran over in Newark last year."

"I don't blame you for lying low and keeping from starting anything," I said. "I was nearly torn to bits by a mob in Long Island City one day for hitting a dog that belonged to a street peddler. In the presence of all these auto cripples I guess our cue is to take our medicine quietly."

Through the evening stillness came the call of an automobile. The screech must have been a mile and a half away; yet we heard it clearly. I had never before realized how far the sound of a good shrieker would carry. It gave one a queer feeling to think that out there in the night a road brother of ours was burning up the macadam to his heart's content while here we were, shut up in an asylum run by a humorous lunatic.

HAVE you tried the walls?"

"All the way round," said Phipps. "You might as well try to climb out of a cistern as out of this place. The walls have a bulge at the top, and there are no ladders. Besides, you mustn't expect to pull any Harry Thaw business where there's a Jerome with a limp watching behind every tree."

"Can't we get in communication with the outside world?"

"Hurley wrote a letter and threw it over the wall one day, tied to a stone. The next day Popkin showed it to us, printed in the Chesterbridge Chronicle with facetious comments by the editor. They published it in the Daffydill Department."

"Tell me one thing more," said I. "How the deuce did I manage to drive into these grounds? I turned the way the signboard directed, down there at the last fork, and immediately rushed through the big gate and found myself wound up in a sort of evergreen labyrinth with Popkin and his lame outthroats surrounding me."

"They gave you the choice of capitulating quietly or being taken by force, didn't they?"

"Yes."

"That's the way it was with me. Popkin explained your position to you very affably, I presume?"

"Almost sweetly."

"Same here, and I got down out of my car like a sheep. The minute before I had been king of the earth, and the farmers' rigs were taking the wall to let

"As a man eats, so is he," said Popkin. "Why shouldn't diet change a scorcher into a safe citizen?"

me pass. The next minute I was abdicating my throne as meek as an earthworm."

"But that doesn't explain why we mistook his private driveway for the main road."

"The explanation is simple. Popkin has an arrangement with the township authorities whereby he is permitted to operate that miserable fingerboard at the forks as a semaphore signal. With a lever here at the house he can throw that signboard around so that it will point up the road leading into his place. It's the simplest automobile trap ever invented. You speed through Chesterbridge at fifty miles an hour, the constable on duty there presses a button that rings a bell in the hall here, Popkin pulls the lever that sets the signboard and opens the gates, and two minutes later you are in the hands of the enemy and helpless as a child."

"Well I'll be ditched!" said I.

AFTER turtle soup the following morning Popkin summoned us to the jail library. "Time for our lecture, Gentlemen," said he. "Yesterday our subject was sloth bears. Today we shall turn to the humble gastropods. I have been watching you for signs of softening of the heart, and I think I can detect them in every one of you except Brandon."

"Count me in on anything that will get me out of this place," I spoke up hastily.

Popkin eyed us shrewdly through his spectacles. "I suggest that you all find as comfortable positions as you can; for it is likely that you will not be comfortable before I am done lecturing you. In the first place, as I have told you before, I am doing you a wrong by compelling you to remain here so long as my guests; yet I have a strong notion that the end in this case will justify the means."

"Doubtless you have agreed among yourselves that I am crazy. Let me say that I am willing to submit to any alienist the question whether the man who attempts to make human life safe is more unbalanced than the men who imperil life at every turn of the road. I will even allow you to name the alienist and retain him yourselves, Gentlemen, and I venture to say he will still decide in my favor; which is something that has never happened yet in any case where expert opinion was asked, so far as my knowledge goes."

Smiling at his pleasantry, he went on. "There are six of you, all notorious scorchers. Primarily you are good at heart and have the instincts of gentlemen. Walking in the street, you never dream of making a man or woman hurry to avoid being trodden by your foot. If an old lady crosses your path, you will no more think of frightening her by yelling at her than you will knock her down with your fist. Yet all this and worse you do as automobilists. In an hour the six of you will probably cause six hundred pedestrians to leap for their lives."

None of us had an answer ready.

"Your offense is not wholly intentional. As enthusiastic scorchers you seldom read. All that you know about the world is what you see with your own eyes, looking ahead and never behind. You therefore do not know that your fellow men are coming to regard you as social enemies. Your own motoring friends who run their cars sanely suffer in popularity because of your excesses in speed, and hold as hard feelings toward you as the plain pedestrian whom you splash from eyeglasses to boots with mud. You, who hurry the most, have not enough time to keep up with the news of the

world and to learn that in Greater New York alone, for example, more than two hundred persons each month are killed or seriously injured by men like you.

"So I have brought you to me in the rather original manner you know, in order to try out my theory of diet upon you and see if it is not possible by careful feeding to alter your natures and make the world a safer place. The possibilities of diet have never been developed. We know that to feed people beef will make them beefy; that a regimen of eggs and milk means light work for a man's stomach and hence gives his brain a chance to perform at its best. We know that certain foods will produce certain conditions of bodily health and influence the mind for good or ill. I go further than any other scientist, and maintain that a diet such as I have laid down for you gentlemen will correct your tendencies toward spoiling if it is persisted in long enough. But let us take up our nature study."

"Popkin," cried Phipps, shaking his fist, "if you mention snails, I'll not be responsible for the consequences!"

"Order!" shouted the lame guard at the door, and thumped on the floor with his heavy cane. It was Girard's waiter. Phipps subsided.

"Edible snails are valuable food," said Mr. Popkin, "and they are indicated as suitable to administer in cases of accelerated ego. The snail is not the objectionable creature that some of you seem to think. It travels on its stomach, true; but so does an army. It has horns; but horns are not considered disagreeable in a Texas steer. It carries its house on its back; but you are not asked to eat its house. It is only a lovely mollusk; but so is the oyster. Let us stop finding fault with the snail, and note its admirable quality, its slowness."

"Do you ever hear of a snail boring through a peaceful village at sixty miles an hour? Do you ever read in the papers that the police of twelve counties are looking for a low, gray snail with red wheels that ran down a baby carriage containing twins? Did you ever know of a snail disappearing in a cloud of dust, leaving elderly gentlemen standing on their left ears in the gutter? Is it ever related of a snail that it charged a crowd of innocent and happy people waiting to board a streetcar and hung them in the trees overhead? The snail, Gentlemen, is one of the noblest of animals. I recommend it to your attention at luncheon today, which will be served at the usual hour. Tomorrow's lesson, by the way, will be botanical. We shall discuss the pokeweed in all its branches, and I will ask you to examine some microscope slides of the pokeweed. Good day, Gentlemen."

WE looked at one another and then at Popkin, who rose.

"Mr. Popkin," he said, "it is the sentiment of our friends here, including Mr. Brandon, that your wonderful diet has worked in us the hopes for miracle. In fact, I may say that it has completely cured us of a speed mania with which we were suffering when we came to your jail."

"My sanatorium," interrupted Popkin kindly.

"When we came to your sanatorium we were suffering from speedomania in its worst form; but thanks to the fast which we have undergone here as your prisoners—"

"As my patients," corrected Popkin.

"Thanks to the fast which we have undergone as



"This and worse you do as automobilists."